

Alternative Realities by niiizu

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Summary:

Mike wakes up to a completely different El and wonders what went wrong.

1. Prologue

Author's Note:

Disclaimer: Stranger things isn't mine.

N/A: Hello! I'm so glad to be posting this! It's my first fanfic in english (I'm brazilian) so I'd love if you could congratulate me on this and let me know if there are any mistakes or strange sentences. Plus, I wrote it all in one day, when I needed to get over some holiday blues (three days until Christmas!), so it's a big accomplishment, guys. A huge one. Thank you for being a part of it!

Moreover: it's an attempt at writing humor for the first time. Can you tell me if it worked?

The dim light of the basement darkened by the blanket fort made Eleven yawn. All her friends were sleeping by her side and she felt safe and loved. Mike was holding her hand and she was looking at him while she waited patiently for sleep to take her away. He was also looking at her, with matching half-opened eyes and a calm smile.

They did a marathon of Star Wars and pizza after they finished a school project together, a huge model of an energy station. School was, most of the time, a bit hard for Eleven. She was a bit slow to understand some concepts and had a small struggle with most subjects. Luckily, her friends all loved this or that subject and each one helped her in a different one. Ironically, the subject they all sucked at, Physical Education, was the one she was the best. Most of the time she used her powers to pull the ball towards her or to push her body up on the climbing rope, but that did not mean she was not using her body, so she never felt like she was cheating.

However, she did wonder in which subject she would be good at if she had had a normal childhood. Would she be able to draw like Will, or understand Science like Dustin? Would she write as well as Mike or memorize History like Lucas? Maybe she would be as good in Math as Max.

"Mike" she called, noticing his eyes were still half-open.

"Hmm?" he muttered, mostly sleeping than awake.

"If I went to school since I was around Holly's age, in which subject do you think I'd be best at?"

"I don't know, El... maybe Physics?" he answered drifting back to sleep while his imagination was filled with images of El moving objects with her mind while formulas and graphs floated around her.

She felt bad for waking him up and let him sleep. Not too long later, she followed him, imagining herself as Jane Hopper, a natural at Physics.

2. Chapter 2

Mike woke up to the doorbell, jumping from his bed. He was lying in a strange position, still wearing his shoes and a pool of drool was visible on his pillow.

The bell rang again and the visitor seemed impatient. Mike turned his pillow upside down, smoothed his clothes and went down the stairs to open the door as fast as he could.

What he saw would have made his jaw fall on the floor if it were possible. Eleven was standing in front of him, hair much longer than he remembered she had, wearing a black dress, combat boots and lots of black makeup on her eyes. She reminded him of herself when she appeared at Will's house after spending a year hiding in Hopper's cabin. She seemed pissed at him, which was a first in all of the years they knew each other.

"It was about time, Wheeler! Were you sleeping or what?"

"... Well, I was sleeping. I didn't know you were coming over." He answered a bit embarrassed and shocked at her attitude.

"Did you forget about it?"

"About what?"

"The physics homework, idiot! Are you going to let me in or what?"

"Oh, sorry. But we finished that last week! It's due tomorrow!" He said giving her space and closing the door behind her. He was worried now, why was El treating him like that? Also, how could they forget about homework? She was always careful to study first for the subjects she wasn't very good at. She wouldn't have let it slip.

"Uh... no, we didn't. And don't worry, it'll be easy. Physics is mostly interpretation. Once we're over that, it'll be piece of cake." She smiled for the first time. However, it wasn't her normal smile, but it was a confident, much wider than her usual smiles.

"Okay. We can study downstairs in the basement. I'm going to get us

something to eat; you can wait for me there." He said heading towards the kitchen.

"Uh... Michael?" She called and he came back quickly "yeah?"

"Where's your basement?"

"What?" He almost shouted this time, not believing his ears.

"I've never been here, Wheeler. Where is your basement?"

"What do you mean you've never been here? Of course you have!"

"Michael, we've known each other for ten years, but I never came here and you never went to my house. Are you crazy? Are you still sleeping?" She almost shouted too.

Ten years? No, it couldn't be. They were seventeen now. They met at 12 or 13 years old. It didn't make sense. She was pissed. He had never seen El so pissed before; he didn't even know she was able to be so angry at him. Still, what was she talking about? She didn't make any sense at all, from her long hair to her attitude, even the words she was speaking.

"Look, why don't tell me where the freaking basement is and go, I don't know, wash your face or something?" She said massaging her temples.

Mike gave up. He took her to the door and opened it, and she disappeared downstairs. He went to the bathroom and brushed his teeth, washed his face. The he grabbed his backpack; got a few snacks and put them in a tray with a jar of juice and glasses, and went to the basement too.

She was looking at the place as if she actually never went there. She read the books' spines and video tapes' covers, looking curiously at the blanket fort and brushed her fingers on the Millennium Falcon, clearly looking like she never saw it before.

He placed the tray on the table. Her notebooks were already out of her backpack. The cover showed a rock band and a label read Jane Ives in a delicate cursive handwriting that didn't look at all like hers,

which was stiffy since she didn't have the opportunity to write a lot in the years she should have been at school.

Jane Ives? What about Hopper?

"Jane?" he called, the name feeling strange in his mouth.

"Hmm? Ah." She walked towards the table. "Your basement is very nice. I see why you wanted me to see it so much."

"I did?" He asked, not helping making himself look like a fool again.

"Yeah, you know, when you were talking about how we could do the homework here. When Mrs. Collins assigned us together."

"Oh." He pretended he understood, afraid she would be mad at him again. They always did their homework together, except if the teachers chose the groups, and then El would end up with some moron who didn't treat her and her usual questions like he did. But this girl didn't ask him a single question until now. At least not the kind of questions he usually got from her. She, actually, was giving him answers for the first time.

He bit the inside of his cheek, checking if he was dreaming, but apparently not. Maybe he was trapped in a reality where El was a normal girl and they weren't friends. He actually thought about these possibilities a lot, these alternative realities. After all, the Upside Down was real. Very much real.

Then he just decided to go along with it and enjoy this El while he could. It wasn't a normal behavior for this kind of situation from what he knew, but taking strange girls home on rainy nights wasn't exactly normal too.

Meanwhile, Jane was already sitting down while he was standing, looking at nothing and frowning. She didn't know if she was supposed to run away from him or if she could laugh at him, but she chose the latter.

"Did you see a ghost?" She asked playfully. He realized what he was doing and shook his head, sitting down.

She was really good at Physics and her handwriting was beautiful. He was surprised every time she stopped a few seconds to think about an exercise and came up with a huge theory about it, throwing her pencil around to show him the movement the objects were supposed to make, even explaining some exercises to him. She did the Math calculus silently instead of murmuring the concepts and counting on her fingers. She put her hair up in a bun with a pen and she didn't have the tattoo on her wrist.

They finished homework in record time.

"And we're finished! See? Piece of cake" She was a lot happier than before, smiling all the time. Her smile was really bigger than El's, like she was more used to doing it than... well, herself. From another dimension, maybe.

"Yeah, it was really easy. I didn't know you were so good at Physics."

"Well, I'm not used to brag about my grades, but Mrs. Collins says I'm one of the best in our year"

"Wow! This is amazing, El!" He said surprised and proud, forgetting who he was talking to.

"What did you just call me?"

"Jane. I called you Jane. There was something in my teeth, you know..." His voice got a pitch higher because of the obvious lie.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. I don't need to know the details, Wheeler."

"Sorry."

There was an embarrassing silence between them and Jane finished her drink to fill it. Mike looked at his watch.

"So... it's still early. Do you want to watch a movie or something?" He asked embarrassed. It was already hard to invite El to this kind of things; he didn't even know how he got the courage to do it with this nerdy-punk version of her.

"Yeah, I guess. What do you want to watch?"

They sat down on his couch, sharing a popcorn in between them. Jane popped it, she had this crazy secret recipe and it was delicious. The movie was nice, she had never watched it before and looked as interested as El would.

3. Chapter 3

On the next day, at school, Mike was wondering if he was already in his reality or not. Everything else looked the same and he wasn't sure. He met his friends in the parking lot, by Lucas' car. He was the first one of them to get one, after doing almost all of the chores of the house for a year. It used to be his mom's.

"So did Ives show up yesterday?" Dustin asked him right after they greeted each other.

"Yeah, she's actually pretty good at Physics" Mike answered, half wondering why Dustin was asking him that and thankful that they didn't talk about something he wouldn't be able to understand. Moreover, apparently, rebel El was still a thing. Lucas scoffed.

"She's good at Math alright; the problem is that she never shows up at group activities. At least not with nerds like us. Do you remember seventh grade?"

Obviously, he didn't, and couldn't help showing it.

"Dude! She and that boyfriend of hers did, like, two pages of that huge essay for Mr. Clarke and they wanted us to put their name on it!"

Jane had a boyfriend. Okay, that was news.

"But I think she's doing better now. I mean, her notebooks are like, amazing. She even color-codes stuff." Mike said, not being able to not take her side.

"Well, apparently study session was a real changer for you, huh? You hated the girl until yesterday." Dustin said as they walked towards the school.

"I did?" He asked surprised.

"Yeah" Dustin answered, his tone making it sound obvious "Ever since the essay Lucas talked about. What did she do to you?"

Mike got quiet, trying to imagine himself hating Eleven. It wasn't possible. It physically hurt, actually. He and Will walked a few steps behind their friends, who talked about how Jane Ives and her friends weren't trustable.

"Don't mind them," Will said, "You know Dustin had that crush on Jane when she got into school." Mike's eyes grew so wide he thought they might pop out of his head. "She's nice now; she sometimes fights the bullies on PE for me."

And then they changed subjects, finally.

Mike's schedule was the same as before, and so were his friends'. That meant the only class he had alone with Jane was Physics, the last one of the day. It meant he had no idea where he was supposed to sit. The only person he kind of knew was a guy who sat by his side on Literature last year, but they didn't really talk except for school stuff. Especially when he had El by his side.

In order to sit on a random chair in Physics without looking so suspicious, he stood up by the door on the corridor talking to Lucas until the teacher appeared, walking into the class right behind her. Then he sat on the first chair he saw on the front, since almost all of them were already taken.

The teacher asked them to put their homework on her table. Jane, along with other students, stood up and did it, never looking at Mike. He looked back on the class to see if anyone looked oddly at him, maybe asked him why the hell he was sitting there, but apparently no one cared. Okay. It had been a while since he didn't have a class with any of his friends. More precisely, when Will was his only friend on Elementary school and didn't come.

The teacher asked them to read a chapter while she looked at the activities. Mike would normally talk to El during that, making sure she understood everything. The entire class was talking. Since he was alone, he simply read the chapter, finding it difficult to concentrate with all the noise.

"Ives, Wheeler. Great job, you two. I finally managed to put some of my best students together and it was worth it." The teacher said,

leaving the class silent for a while, everybody looking from Mike to Jane, him sitting at the front and her at the back.

A few students, friends with Jane, started mocking her for that. She ignored them and told them to shut up, looking at her book. Her friends were also weirdos at the school, but differently from Mike and his friends. These people had troubled families; some of them drank before they entered school. Mike felt worried about Jane, walking around with those people.

At the end of the class, Mike took more time than necessary to pack up when he saw Jane was also one of the last students in class. Her friends were gone.

"Hey" he said, walking towards her.

"Ah, hey Wheeler. What's up?" She said, looking up quickly at him and then back to her open bag.

"Nothing. I just wanted to say, despite the mockery, we were a really good team." She closed her bag and looked at him, half-smiling.

"I know, right? I missed it."

Mike was surprised by that, but disguised it with a matching smile.

"Maybe we can team up again next time without being forced to do it." She said leaving. He muttered an embarrassed "Sure".

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Mike spent half of the afternoon at the basement, with boxes labeled "Mike's School". He didn't find a single essay that had Jane's name, nor any of his old personal notebooks had anything about her. He remembered he usually wrote about the D&D campaign he would be working at, or the comic book he was obsessing about, so he thought they might have something talking about Jane. Nothing.

He really didn't want to do that, but he should. It was his last resource.

Notes for the Chapter:

Is this too small? Maybe. But I did want to leave a cliffhanger!

4. Chapter 4

"Mike? Didn't we agree to go to your house tonight?" Asked Will when he saw his friend on his doorstep.

"Ah... you know." He started, but gave up on the act "I want to talk to you about something."

"Okay... Come in."

They were sitting on Will's bed and Mike was still trying to figure out the words to say. When he looked around at the room full of drawings on the walls, he missed a few ones. Instead of asking why they were missing, he had an idea.

"So. Yesterday I was taking a nap and I hit the bed with my head. Like, really hard." Will agreed in silence, encouraging him to speak. "And today I'm trying to remember a few things, you know, memories, and I can't do it... really... well." He was clearly lying and making it up as he spoke. He knew that. Will knew that.

"And why haven't you gone to see a doctor?"

"Ah... you know. I don't really like hospitals. And I didn't want to worry my mom."

"Okay." Will said, getting over the lie and trying to know the actual reason Mike was saying those things.

"And I was wondering if you could help me remind a few things about Jane Ives...?"

That surprised Will. He thought Mike was playing a prank on him, but Mike wouldn't base pranks on Jane Ives. He started to get worried.

"Um... are you sure you don't want to go to the doctor?" He said, as one last resource.

"I am. Completely sure."

"Okay. Do you want the whole story or...?"

"Everything."

"Wow. Okay. Well, we met Jane on the first year of Middle school, when she moved to Hawkins with her mother." Mike nodded as Will spoke "She always studied at our school, most of the years on the same class as ours. Her best friend is Max Mayfield, do you remember her?"

"Redhead, California, skateboard?"

"Yeah, that one. They are best friends since Max came to live at Hawkins... I don't remember when, but it was on Middle too." Mike nodded.

"Before that she was friends with all kinds of people and was a part of most of the groups in school at some point. All of her other best friends moved from Hawkins at some point. Lydia Smith, Bernard Adams, Aaron Nichols..." Mike nodded at every people Will mentioned. They were all completely different, from normal people and weirdos to jocks.

"And she also dated David Cooper." At the mention of Cooper, Mike frowned. He was one of the most annoying bullies they ever had to put up with. He didn't exactly make fun of them, but he made Mike, his friends and other random good students do his homework for him. He remembered one day he forced Mike to do a stupid map for Geography and trapped him in the library for hours. He was right there, making sure Mike wouldn't go away, eating candy and, of course, not giving a single bite to Mike.

"Don't you remember him too?" Will asked.

"No, I do. I just don't know how she could end up with someone like him."

"Well, none of us did either. Do you remember the long essay Lucas told you about today?" Mike nodded. "It was about binominal nomenclature. Do you remember that?"

Of course Mike did. It took them days and they ended up with almost

a handwritten book. It was hell, but the look of pride on Mr. Clarke's face was priceless. Their essay was the longest one, by far. They spent all winter break doing it, taking turns writing. Cooper had bothered someone else about it, probably because it was right after Will came back from the Upside Down and El had just broken Troy's arm, so they were bullying free for a few months.

"Well, basically Cooper and Jane met us at the library once and they wrote, like, two pages each. Crappy pages, we didn't even use them. Then they left and never talked about it again until the day before the essay was due and he demanded we put their names on it. You and Lucas were the angriest at him, but he made us do it and then he punched you guys after school anyway. Jane wasn't with him at the moment, but they were still together. And since then you hated her with all your guts. Until yesterday, I guess?"

Mike stopped for a while and thought. That didn't make sense. Jane wouldn't be mentioning such a traumatizing group work experience. Anyone who did that would use a tone with a lot more mockery than she did. And she wouldn't be such a great student now, out of nothing.

"Are you sure that's everything?"

"Um... not really. There is another thing about this essay that was really strange. Before winter break, the time we agreed to actually start working on the essay, you showed up with more than half of it done. You said you did it all by yourself, but it had two handwritings. You said it was Nancy's, but all of us know her handwriting isn't cursive. And you insisted it was hers and no one could make you tell the truth."

Mike was surprised at himself by this. Friends don't lie. Why would he lie to them?

When Mr. Clarke handed them the essay back with a huge "A", they decided that Will should keep it, since he went through so much on the Upside Down. The essay hanged on his fridge for months and everybody would look at it with pride, even the adults.

"Do you still have it?" Mike asked.

"Of course. My mom would never let me throw it away. Let me look for it."

He found it between his old drawing notebooks. Mike passed his eyes through the pages and quickly found a handwriting that didn't belong to him and his friends. It was cursive, not as well made as Jane's today, but it certainly could be a previous version of it.

"It's hers, isn't it?"

"It could be" Mike admitted. Screw himself from this universe, he would tell the truth. Friends don't lie.

Of course, you can't tell people in other dimensions that you can travel through them, but except for that, no lies at all.

"Ever since that essay you have been holding this weird grudge against her, more than the other boys. She obviously changed, but you can't see that. Maybe until you bumped your head?" Will said, reminding him of the lie.

Mike was overwhelmed with the amount of information and decided to leave, thanking Will. When they were on his doorstep again, he got the courage to ask one last thing.

"Have you ever gone missing?"

"What?"

"You know, for a few days... your mom was crazy... Christmas lights... Nothing?" Will shook his head in denial, wondering if Mike was the one gone missing and crazy. "Okay. Just to make sure. Bye!" He said walking towards his bike before he did another stupid thing.

5. Chapter 5

For the rest of the week Mike and Jane had a few classes together, but never just the two of them. The whole party and the girls had Geography together (hence the model they made), but in this reality the boys sat on the front of the class while Max and Jane looked absentmindedly at the window all the time.

Every time Will caught Mike looking at Jane, he felt bad for him. His eyes sparkled when he saw her, like she was something precious and important. He muttered to her once "Go talk to her", but Mike only replied "Physics class".

Mike would know that he woke up at the same reality every day because he wrote on the last page of his Physics notebook "Apologize to Jane Ives", and he checked every day if it was there, first thing in the morning. All the notes El made on his notebooks weren't there anymore. Formulas and names, hearts and stars drawn on bored moments, notes on the last page about how the class was boring. All gone. He missed it.

Jane was an enigma and he felt he should sort things out between them in order to go back to his reality. He was eager for that, but he also missed his El very much. They were and weren't the same person. She would tap her pencil on the metal part of the chair when she was bored and call Max "Maxie" just as El did. Still, there were so many differences between them that sometimes he felt he was cheating on El. Not that they had something named back on his universe (and he knew he held the full blame for that), but they had something anyway.

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It was finally Physics class. Last class of Friday, all the students wanted to murder the teacher in order to go home already. However, she was a calm, smiley old lady and she had enough years of teaching to get over that.

Mrs. Collins asked the class to form the same pairs they made on the activity they handed her on the last class. Mike couldn't hold his grin

very much as he pulled a chair by Jane's side. Apparently, none of the other teams understood the concepts of that chapter, except for Jane and Mike, so the teacher started to explain each exercise in full detail, talking to them like they were 5 years-old.

Jane couldn't be more bored. She was mimicking the teacher's words when she said a formula or a concept, something that El never did, since she was always interested in the class, in case she had any questions she didn't think about before.

At one point Jane fell asleep, her hand holding her head lazily. Mrs. Collins glared at her, so Mike touched her lightly on the arm to wake her up. Jane looked at him as if he had just grown a second head.

"She was looking at you" He explained. She calmed down.

At the end of the class, the teacher asked them to do a few more exercises to make sure they understood the concepts and said they could pair up with whomever they wanted. Mike got anxious and excited at the same time. He looked at Jane from the corner of his eye and she looked at him at the same time and smiled. He relaxed almost instantly, smiling back.

"But we're not going to make it the day before we're supposed to hand it" He said.

"Sure, whatever. Just let me finish the History essay first."

"But it's due for a week after this one" He replied.

"Yeah, but I prefer to do the homework for the subjects I'm not exactly good at first."

He was quiet for a moment. El did the same. He smiled tenderly, recalling her quiet look of determination when she had to do difficult homework.

"I can help you with that if you want" He offered, slightly embarrassed. They had that class together too, along with Dustin and Max.

"It's supposed to be done by ourselves, you know" She remembered

him.

"Yeah, that's why I said I could help you and not be a part of it or something" He answered. His words were a bit rude, but she didn't see any annoyance on his expression. That was the kindest he's ever been to her in years, so she agreed to it.

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"Lucas, are you there? Over." Mike called from the Supercomm.

"Yeah, go ahead."

"So... Do you know if Winston Churchill's last tenure was before or after the World War II? Over."

"Why are you asking me that? Are you doing the History essay?"

"Yes. Over."

"But your theme was the Korean War."

"It's that... I got this question... when I was studying... and didn't know where to find. Just say it already. Over." He was obviously lying.

"It was after that. Elizabeth II was made queen during it."

"Ok, thanks, bye! Over and out!" He said as quickly as possible and turned off the Supercomm. "There you go." He said to Jane, who was doing the History essay while he studied Math.

"Why did you offer to help me if you were going to ask your friends?" She asked, not believing he had to call Sinclair.

"Because I like History, but I'm not that good at the chronology."

"And what's History besides chronology?" She scoffed.

"Tons of other things." He answered simply and looked back at his notebook.

A few hours later, Jane was finished. Her head and her wrist hurt,

but Mike did know more about History than her and he helped her a lot on deciphering the books she borrowed from the library.

She stretched herself lazily as he walked up the stairs and got them something to eat. They put the books away and ate sandwiches made by his mother (who was jumping with happiness as his boy was, at last, with a girl), while they read comic books until the night fell.

"Isn't it dangerous to go home by foot at this time?" He asked when he saw the dark, moonless night as he escorted her to the front door.

"Kind of. But I left my bike at home." She said, not really caring.

"Do you want a ride?" He asked shyly.

She looked at the dark street. It was a long walk.

"Yeah, sure." She shrugged.

The bike ride took fifteen minutes, which was a long walk. Jane's house was a small, yellow two-stored house. It was simple, but it was cute. It looked like somewhere El would also like to live.

Jane hopped out of the bike and thanked him quickly before walking to her door.

"Wait!" He said, louder than he intended to. She walked back to him with curiosity. "I just wanted to say... I was a jerk to you on the past and I'm sorry about it. I hope we can be friends, or at least do homework together more often, or whatever" He rambled.

Jane smiled. "It's okay. I was stupid back then too. I'm sorry."

He smiled too as his face fell hot with embarrassment.

"Besides, we're going to have to do that Physics thing anyway. This wasn't the last time I went to your basement." She joked. He laughed a bit and they fell into silence again. She leaned over and gave him a light peck on the cheek, murmured a "bye!" and ran to her front door, smiling shyly at him before closing it.

Mike biked back home feeling as if his duty had been accomplished,

his face red and his heart aching for El and Jane at the same time.

Notes for the Chapter:

I just want to say that I'm watching The Crown on Netflix and that was the best historic reference I could make. Also, if this fanfic sounds too British, blame it on that. And a slight obsession with Jane Austen.

6. Epilogue

Loud voices were slowly pulling him away from sleep, but Mike actually woke up when a pillow was thrown on his face and laughter filled his ears.

"Good morning, sleeping beauty!" said Lucas when he opened his eyes.

"Dude, you slept for ages! We ate the last slices of pizza for breakfast waiting for you to wake up" Dustin said, folding a blanket.

Mike suddenly remembered his dream (if it really was one) and sat up, looking for El. She was folding a sheet with Max. He breathed out relieved.

"Did you have a nightmare?" She asked him, watching his reaction.

"Sort of. But I guess I fixed it." He smiled. She sat down in front of him and he couldn't help hugging her tightly. "I missed you there" he whispered. She hugged him back, caressing his back lightly. "You had long hair. It was beautiful" She laughed embarrassed.

When they pulled out, Mike noticed they were all by themselves.

"Where's everybody?"

"They went upstairs. Didn't you hear Dustin say it?" He shook his head as a no. She laughed and he pulled her closer, kissing her. El wasn't used to that, it had been a few months since their last kiss. But she kissed him back gently, happily.

"By the way" he said as they parted, "Do you want to be my girlfriend?"

Notes for the Chapter:

It's over! Are you sure you need to know what she answered? Isn't it obvious?

If you're reading this, thank you! Don't forget to

leave a comment and let me know what you think about the story and about my writing. Since I wrote this in a single day, it's divided in chapters but I posted them all at once, because they're really short. I was thinking about doing a second epilogue where Mike from the other reality meets Jane after our Mike fixed things up. What do you think about it? Please, let me know!

Again, thank you so much for reading! This work is a big step for me and I'd be really glad to know if someone appreciated it.